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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH BRIGADIER GENERAL ABDEL
KARIM
KHALAF, IRAQI MINISTRY OF INTERIOR SPOKESMAN AND CHIEF OF POLICE; FOLLOWED
BY
BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID PHILLIPS, DEPUTY COMMANDER, CIVILIAN POLICE
ASSISTANT TRAINING TEAM, MNSTC-I (VIA TELECONFERENCE)

MODERATOR: JACK HOLT, CHIEF, NEW MEDIA OPERATIONS

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(Note: The spokesman's remarks are provided through an interpreter unless otherwise noted.)

MR. HOLT: Hello.

GEN. KHALAF: (In English.) Hello.

MR. HOLT: General Khalaf?

GEN. KHALAF: (In English.) Yes.

MR. HOLT: Yes. Jack Holt with the Bloggers Roundtable, and glad you could be with us

today. (Pause to make telephone adjustments.)

Welcome to the Bloggers Roundtable. Glad you could be with us. And is there an opening statement or do we want to move right into questions and answers?

GEN. KHALAF: Sure, just go to questions.

MR. HOLT: All right. Let's start with Andrew Lubin. Andrew.

Q Good morning, General. My name is Andrew Lubin. Can you tell us, please, about the new Iraqi police academy you've opened in Anbar province?

GEN. KHALAF: Okay.

Q How many people do you have enrolled? And tell us as much as you can about it.

INTERPRETER: Okay, just hold on a second. Let me ask him. (Translating question to Minister Khalaf.)

He says this is the first academy opened after the regime of Saddam Hussein is gone in the Ramadi. (Inaudible) -- three things. The first thing, make people come into the service and the police. Second thing, they train them to get better. Also, the same thing about the (policy manuals ?) we have now they have to train again in the academy and make more stronger. Some of them, they're going to be responsible for the human rights, and they have about 3,000 persons, and the support is from the ministry. And they have (extra things to sign up for it ?) and the support from the ministry.

And that first school to train our military, our police in the Ramadi. This is because Ramadi is a big city, and they have a special saying to do it with the people in Ramadi, so they can be (trained now ?) inside the city and give them chance to get better for the policemen over there.

Any questions?

Q How long is the training? How long did the program last?

GEN. KHALAF: They had some for the first one, it was for 45 days, and we have them for 90 days. When the first one, it was for 21 days, it was for the policemen, which we have policemen, to have them train -- (inaudible) -- for 21 days.

This number they have -- (inaudible) -- bodyguard, which kind of bodyguard they have. The bodyguard, they have to inform people. They know what they have to do. They going to pick up those -- (inaudible) -- academy. (Inaudible) -- they have the special thing for us. And this thing there has been with what we believe in the ministry.

Anything else?

MR. HOLT: Okay, David.

Q Sure, this is David Axe with Danger Room and others.

Could you -- I didn't understand some of what was just said. Could you repeat some of the

information about the size of the police academy and the length of the training? In other words --

GEN. KHALAF: The size?

Q The size, as in, how many students and how many instructors?

GEN. KHALAF: (Inaudible) -- the academy?

Q How many students and how many instructors?

GEN. KHALAF: Students -- (inaudible) -- 3,000.

Q 3,000 instructors?

GEN. KHALAF: Yes.

Q Okay, and how many students?

GEN. KHALAF: 200 person.

Q So there are 200 instructors and 3,000 students at any given time?

GEN. KHALAF: Yes.

Q Okay, 200 instructors.

GEN. KHALAF: This is not to claim it was lack of security and bodyguards. They don't -- (inaudible) -- with it.

Q Okay.

Q What was that?

Q And the training is 45 days long?

GEN. KHALAF: What?

Q How long is the training for the average trainee, for the average student?

GEN. KHALAF: Okay, they have some for 21 days, and they have some for 45 days, and we have some for 90 days.

Q What's the difference?

GEN. KHALAF: Different kind of bodyguard.

Q For different kinds of police?

Q Right.

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Q Yes, okay, also, how many international instructors do you have? And what are their roles?

GEN. KHALAF: Okay -- (inaudible) -- people, they going to be like the adviser force.

Q Advisers?

GEN. KHALAF: Yes.

Q How many do you have?

GEN. KHALAF: (Inaudible) -- special place in the academy. We cannot say how many of these there are going to be.

Q Okay, so my final question, then, is, how important are the foreign advisers? In other words, is the police academy capable of being entirely Iraqi-run?

GEN. KHALAF: Yes -- (inaudible) -- they going to watch -- (inaudible) -- and how they do it.

Q So the academy is basically Iraqi-run?

GEN. KHALAF: The Iraqis, yes.

Q It's all Iraqis doing the training.

Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

GEN. KHALAF: You're welcome. You're welcome.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Mark Finkelstein.

Q Yes, good morning. This is Mark Finkelstein from Newsbusters. Thank you for being with us, General.

My question is this: How has the increased presence of police in Anbar province changed life for average Iraqis in cities like Ramadi and Fallujah? Are people able to go about their lives in a fairly normal day-to-day kind of way now due to the presence of an Iraqi police force?

GEN. KHALAF: Because -- (inaudible) -- and they have to go this academy. But the special people, they're going to be people from Ramadi and Fallujah -- (word inaudible) -- and Hit -- all of the city. And it's -- (inaudible) -- people want to go this academy is okay with (us ?). And actually, this academy is -- (inaudible).

Q Okay. I'm not sure that I was making my question clear. My question is: From the point of view of average Iraqi citizens who live in cities like Ramadi and Fallujah, how has the presence of Iraqi police changed or improved their lives? Are these places safer and easier to live in because of the presence of an Iraqi police force?

GEN. KHALAF: Did you mean the academy?

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Q Not the presence of the academy, but the -- no, I mean the presence of the graduates of the academy, the people, the Iraqis who are now actually serving as police in the neighborhoods of those cities. How has their presence and their work changed life for Iraqis that are living there?

GEN. KHALAF: Okay. Because these people when they graduate, they're going to stay in this city because they know how they deal with the city.

Q Okay.

GEN. KHALAF: Okay.

Q Jack, I don't know if you can help me a little bit here.

MR. HOLT: Yeah, so the students that are at the new academy will be police officers within the city. So is -- how many -- how has the presence of the police within the city improved the lives of the citizens?

GEN. KHALAF: How are they're going to improve the lives?

MR. HOLT: Has normal life returned to Ramadi?

GEN. KHALAF: Of course, they're going -- (off mike) -- lives over there.

(Question is repeated in Arabic for Minister Khalaf.)

Well, the policemen will get to graduate. They're going to -- (inaudible). The civilian people, when they go get trained for the academy and get to graduate, they're going to serve in the same city, in Ramadi.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right. All right, thank you.

GEN. KHALAF: You're welcome.

MR. HOLT: Michael.

Q Can you hear me?

MR. HOLT: Yes.

Q My question is there has been reported that seven of nine brigade commanders have been relieved from the national --

GEN. KHALAF: You can repeat your question again, please.

Q Seven of nine brigade commanders from the Iraqi police were relieved of command. Was that due to incompetence, or was that due to something else?

INTERPRETER: Seven or nine what?

Q Commanders of brigades in the national police were relieved of their commands.

INTERPRETER: The national police.

(Inaudible) -- what? The academy?

Q No, from the national police force.

INTERPRETER: From the national police force?

Q Yes.

INTERPRETER: Okay.

Q So I'm wondering: Why were these commanders relieved? And is there -- is the academy training leadership --

(Arabic cross talk.)

INTERPRETER: Do you mean the people yesterday in The Washington Post?

Q I'm not sure I understand.

INTERPRETER: The people they talk about in The Washington Post?

Q Yes.

INTERPRETER: There were seven people?

Q Yes.

INTERPRETER: That's what you mean?

Q Yes.

INTERPRETER: Okay. Yeah.

GEN. KHALAF: The information you have from The Washington Post -- not truth.

Q Not true.

GEN. KHALAF: Not truth. And they are in service now.

And General Hassan (sp), he's still in service. The minister -- (inaudible) -- another place is more important. This, for example, for one of whom -- and another name was -- (inaudible) -- although they look for them for another place, it is more about where they are for now.

The ministry was -- the woman -- they say she gets -- like in the business for (our military ?). That's truth.

We deal with our -- (inaudible).

Anything else?

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: And -- (inaudible).

Q Good afternoon, General.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Hey.

Q The Sunni population in Baghdad and throughout Iraq many times are afraid of the police.

INTERPRETER: Hold on, hold on. The Sunni what?

Q The Sunni people in Baghdad --

INTERPRETER: Okay.

Q -- and in Iraq --

INTERPRETER: Sunni people in Baghdad --

Q -- and in Iraq are afraid of the police many times. So how does the police --

INTERPRETER: Okay.

Q How does the police bring peace then to the -- so the Sunni will not be afraid?

GEN. KHALAF: How the Sunnis get afraid to the police and what we have polices (too ?). In my office, I have 50 person who are Sunni.

(Cross talk in Arabic.)

INTERPRETER: Okay. (Inaudible) -- he has like 50 -- they work in his office. We have more of whom are Sunni, and when they come in the last 10 days, a new hiring is five Sunni.

And they're surprised what they see over there, because they believe or they think like how -- your question now.

And this thing is not (truthfully ?), because people is not afraid from police. The police (inaudible word) for this people. And we have like from Sunni or Shi'a who have broken the law, for of whom both -- for example -- and we have like for -- one place is -- (a little ?) people over there is Shi'a, and more people are Sunni. We have this, but it is not a problem there.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Okay.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you, General Khalaf, for being with us, and we really appreciate your input.

GEN. KHALAF: Thank you.

Q Thank you. (Pause.)

Q Hello?

MR. HOLT: Hello?

Q Hello?

Q Are we finished?

MR. HOLT: I believe so. And we should be waiting for General Phillips --

GEN. PHILLIPS: I'm on the air right now. I dialed in a few minutes ago.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Is there -- do you happen to have an opening statement?

GEN. PHILLIPS: I would just like to say I came back from Habbaniya out in Al Anbar province just the other day, and there are some significant advancements taking --

INTERPRETER: Are you done with me?

MR. HOLT: Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

INTERPRETER: Okay. Thank you.

Q Thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Thank you.

GEN. PHILLIPS: -- especially since -- I spent three, four months over here in 2003, and then I had a 15-month tour as a brigade commander. Now I'm back over here. And comparing Al Anbar province and what's going on in Habbaniya with the academy to what I saw just months ago is night and day. People are back on the streets, commerce is up and going, and it's not the same -- it's not the same country out there that I saw just a short time ago.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And that kind of goes to a question that Mark Finkelstein had for General Khalaf, so, Mark, would you want to restate your question for General Phillips?

Q Yes, thank you. And thank you very much, General Phillips, for being with us. I had asked the Iraqi general the question of how the presence in Iraqi cities -- you know, like Habbaniya, Ramadi and Fallujah has improved or changed the quality -- the day-to-day quality of life for average Iraqi citizens. And I think, you know, you have now addressed that, but if I could invite you to expand on that, we'd appreciate it.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Sure. Right now you're seeing many of the tribes, the families -- and it appears they've had their fill of al Qaeda, of the terrorism that's going on, and losing their sons and daughters is just having their livelihoods torn apart.

As you know, Al Anbar was an absolute combat zone. That was about as down and dirty as you could get. But now they've rallied together. They're allowing their sons to go to the academies and train to be police officers, and they have their local groups, which are basically like community watch groups -- they're working hand in hand with the Marine forces out there and the Army forces that are out there.

They're turning in the insurgents. They're turning in caches of weapons. And I have to tell you that commerce is working, the stores are back open, and you get small kids on the streets now waving as you go by in a humvee. You didn't see that a few months back.

Q Okay. That's the sort of information I was looking for.

Just a quick point of clarification, I was at Camp Habbaniya in November, and I know that it's a training site for the Iraqi 1st Army Division. Is Habbaniya also a training site for Iraqi police?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Correct.

Just recently an agreement was reached between the minister of Interior and the minister of Defense to open the Al Anbar-Habbaniya Iraqi Police Academy, and we did some construction out there. We put 750 students through the course at any given time, and it's right on the facility, almost within walking distance from the 1st IA Division Headquarters. But that there is a big step in and of itself that the army and the police are starting to work together; as you know, that's been somewhat problematic at times.

Q Now, there was a Marine unit that had responsibility for the Iraq 1st Army Division training. Is there a separate Marine or Army division that is in charge, or is it all through CPATT for the police side of things?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, actually, I would like to say this is Iraqi-led. Although we have about 15 personnel that are advisers out there from CPATT, the instructors are all Iraqi, the administration of the academy is Iraqi, and it's really totally run -- other than a little bit of tutelage, guidance and mentoring there; we do have some Marines that are providing oversight on the life support contracts to make sure that water, ice, food is all delivered. But short of that, this is an Iraqi-run academy on an Iraqi military installation.

Q Okay. Very interesting. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right. And I believe that kind of leads into the question that David Axe (sp) has.

So David, if you want to expand or follow up?

Q Oh, I don't really want to repeat the question I had before with the Iraqi --

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q But General, thanks for taking the time. I really appreciate it. And I'd like to ask you about the interface between the Iraqi police and the Iraqi judicial system. Are you seeing any improvements there?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I can compare that back to 2003, 2004 and early 2005 and to now. You are seeing it start to get better. And as you know, we increased and grew the Iraqi police, but we didn't increase and grow the Iraqi judicial system simultaneously at the same speed. Therefore, as the police would execute their duties, arrest and apprehend people off the streets for various crimes, they would sit in their detention cells because there was very few investigative judges to take them to.

Well, now with General Petraeus' initiative, we have the rule of law -- the rule of law zone that we're putting together, and it's really a complex. It's where we have investigative judges, investigators, holding cells, and an actual prison. So now the Iraqi police are able to bring somebody that they've arrested before an investigative judge and a determination is to be made whether or not to hold the individual for additional investigation and subsequent prosecution, or to release him because of a lack of evidence.

That's the long pole in the tent we didn't see recently. That is why the Iraqi police jail cells in their individual police stations were getting so overcrowded, and you know any time you get overcrowding in a jail, it's a conviction -- is set and right for our problem. But now that we have the judges up and starting to run cases and they have their investigators at the Rule of Law Complex, which is on the other side of the river, adjacent to the Ministry of the Interior complex, we're starting to get the flow going.

We've got initiatives to open Rule of Law Complexes up in Mosul and some of the other large cities so that once a person is detained, they can expeditiously go in front of an investigative judge. I wouldn't say it's perfect yet, but we have come a long way in just about a year's time frame.

Q General, sorry, a point of clarification. This first Rule of Law Complex is where?

GEN. PHILLIPS: It's on the east side of Baghdad near the Ministry of Interior building, adjacent to the Baghdad Police College.

Q All right.

GEN. PHILLIPS: It's a whole complex where you have the MOJ, the Ministry of Justice, working side by side with the Ministry of the Interior, the police. The traffic headquarters is near that area. But it's a whole complex area where all of the different agencies come together and then try to execute the rule of law -- the triad -- from the police, to the judicial, to the confinement.

Q General, thanks. You have mentioned that before. But in a -- so I understand the process has improved, or at least the infrastructure has improved, but what about the attitudes? Are you seeing just a better spirit of cooperation between these two ministries?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Yes. And you know, that's been problematic in the past. It is very territorial. But what you just saw with Habbaniya and the Police Academy, between minister of Defense and Interior to work this out, where you're now seeing between the Ministry of the Interior who gave up land to the minister of Justice for this complex. In the past, we would not have seen that happen, at least not with(out) a lot of work. So yes, it's getting better. Not perfect. But I'm very optimistic about this, especially being a career military policeman, I've grown up with the rule of law, and to see it now starting to get practiced over here, I'm optimistic.

Q Thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Andrew.

Q Thanks. General, a quickie question. Listening to these stories of the Sunnis and the Marines in Anbar, which is -- thank God we're hearing this now -- that a lot of this works because the Sunnis are -- they got the cooperation of the leadership of the Sunni chieftains. What's going to happen in Baghdad when you don't have that? You know, how do the -- the IAs there seem to be more Shi'a oriented and JAM-led than IA-led.

GEN. PHILLIPS: That's one of the biggest problems I think you can see over here that we're having to wrestle with, it's where you have the crossroads between the different sects, between the Shi'a and the Sunni. Baghdad is a crossroads where you have Christian, you have Kurdish, you have different sects from Sunni to Shi'a, and wherever you have that, we see that you can have flashpoints.

Al Anbar, as you know, is predominantly Sunni, whereas down south we have predominately Shi'a. That's why there's such an emphasis going on with our search here to try to get a reconciliation between the groups, such as we saw in South Africa years ago when Nelson Mandela came up and, you know, led the way for reconciliation and said I don't care that I was in jail all that time, I forgive you. And then we saw some great leaps there. That is what we're looking to see happen here. And we're waiting for those senior leaders to come forward and do that handshake. At this point, it's still problematic and you're going to have those flashpoints wherever you have a crossroads.

Q Do the people still look at the IA or the IP there as essentially being corrupt and being Shi'a-led or Shi'a-oriented? I'm not sure what term I'm looking for there.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, I guess, I would say, do they look at them in Baghdad as being Shi'a or Jaish al-Mahdi, JAM-influenced? I would say, there are those out there that see that and say that. But also, just to tell you, the other day I drove across the 3rd ID bridge. And there's kids playing in some areas where I never saw them playing before, and I saw policemen on the street. And I didn't know if those were Shi'a or Sunni policemen. But the fact that families were letting their kids play there, again, shows that there is some faith in the fact that these policemen are out there.

But yes, you're always going to have some people suspect that the police are corrupt. But let me ask this. If you look at any other police department in the world, regardless of the country, and if you templated on them the insurgency and the terrorists that we have here, I wonder how they would stand up to it.

If you took the insurgency and terrorists away, I would argue that the Iraqi police force in Baghdad would rival any other like-size city in this region of the world. But once you have the mix of combat that's going on, the police -- we train them to be cops. We don't train them to be soldiers, and they are definitely outgunned.

But are people suspect? Yes. And are there bad policemen? Every department has bad policemen. Are there more here than other places? Well, we've got some problems. But the internal affairs organization is working ruthlessly to capture them and take them into custody. I heard just yesterday that six were arrested for not only accepting bribes but doing a whole bunch of other stuff they shouldn't have been doing. That's a positive thing, that they were at least arrested.

Q Is that Iraqi internal affairs or ours?

GEN. PHILLIPS: That's Iraqi internal affairs, which is led by -- (name inaudible) -- who I knew since he was a major back in 2003. He has probably one of the most dangerous jobs over here, not to say -- to take away from any other job. But he is investigating the Iraqi police and all of the different -- he actually gets other missions, too by direction of the prime minister. He reports to the minister of the Interior, and he handles all the ugly stuff internal.

There's a lot of people that would like to see him fail at his job. There have been multiple attempts on his life. But he's still out there, and he's still doing it.

Q Okay, great, thank you.

MR. HOLT: And Jeff, you're next.

Q General, thanks for your time. I've got a little bit of a curveball question based more on your background than on your position right now.

With -- I was in Baghdad a little while ago embedded, but didn't get out into the countryside or anything like that. And obviously in Baghdad, given the nature of the urban area, there's very little offensive or defensive close air support being used, and therefore very little need for deployment of tactical air controllers or -- (inaudible). How if at all are they being used elsewhere in Iraq? And what kind of air support are we using, as far as our offensive and defensive prosecuting of this post-war?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, I tell you, I fly by air quite a bit, by helicopters. And I'm a military policemen, so really it would not be my area of expertise. I do know that close air support is out there. We have it available to call in. You don't routinely call them in an urban area.

But I'm very confident when I'm out at some of the outlying locations, if I need that close air, it's going to be there for me. I know how to call it in; my security teams know how to call it in. But as for the amount of use in that, I just don't have that type of expertise.

Q Thanks a lot.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Sure.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Mike Goldfarb.

Q I'm all right. I'll pass.

MR. HOLT: Okay, all right, Jarred.

Q Good afternoon, sir. This is Lieutenant Fishman.

Even the mainstream media are now reporting great improvements in Anbar province. But are you confident, though, that we'll see Iraqi police and the Iraqi army improvements, both in Baghdad and Diyala province, once we clear those areas of al Qaeda? That seems to be the biggest trouble spots that we're having now.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, I -- yes, Diyala, up in Baqubah, Baghdad are flashpoints. But it's not

only AQI, not only al Qaeda.

We have Jaish Al-Mahdi, the JAM elements, too, that are also problematic. So it's just not one group, there's multiple groups. But I'm optimistic now that some of the area that some of the areas that I can go back into and feel relatively safe, get out of my humvee, and to walk the street. I still won't stop into stores, though, because I fear the danger that if I shop and buy bread from a bakery like I did in 2003, that the individual who sold it to me might put himself or his family at risk.

But things are improving in some of the areas of Baghdad. I was up in Baqubah the other day, too. There's still some problematic areas, but we do not have a shortage of individuals requesting to join the police. When you hear the suicide bombers inflicting casualties at a recruiting for police, the reason there's casualties is because we have lines of people who still want to join. So I think that's a positive note in and of itself.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Anybody -- has anybody joined us, joined us late?

Q This is -- (name inaudible) -- from -- (affiliation inaudible). I did join you late.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. And do you have a question for General Phillips?

Q I wonder, General, if you know how they plan to establish what David Kilponen (sp) was calling gated communities in Baghdad, how that's playing out in your opinion.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Okay. I can touch on that a bit being a military policeman.

From what I talked to of the families that are inside that area, they are comfortable because there's control as to who comes in their neighborhood and what they may be bringing into their neighborhood. It's like a gated community only a lot more gated than what you would normally have in the states. So there's that sense of security, but I know ultimately they would want those walls gone so that they don't have to have that eye sore right there, and that's good for my conversations with some of the Iraqi police who I socialize with -- I talk to and ask them about it.

Q Thank you.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Sure.

MR. HOLT: Okay. We have a few more minutes here, so if there's any -- anybody have any follow-up questions?

Q I do have one. It's Mark Finkelstein. General, when you were discussing earlier the development of the Iraqi judiciary, you made reference to investigative judges, and that, of course, would be a phenomenon seen in continental legal systems, French civil law, that sort of thing; in contrast with our common law system in England and the United States, where, you know, we have prosecutors and police who do the investigation.

Are you in position to indicate the sort of model upon which the Iraqi criminal legal system is based? Is it indeed based on a continental system or are there also elements from the common law system?

GEN. PHILLIPS: I would have to say that, being a career military policeman, there are

elements from the common law system. We have a significant number of lawyers from both coalition countries and from the United States that are over here coaching and mentoring them. But it is Iraqi law that they're actually executing, similar to the way the court systems were before the war, although definitely not influenced the way they were before the war.

So I think you have a mix. You have to fairly -- a continental system somewhat like the French. We don't have this definitely in the United States, but it appears to be very functional for the Iraqis.

Q Okay. Thank you for that. Thank you.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Sure.

MR. HOLT: All right. Anybody else?

Q Yeah, I have one. General, Andrew Lubin again from ON Point. In many parts of the country where you've been talking, unemployment is at ridiculously high levels. Are you able to quantify how many people are joining the IAs because they're believers, or mostly because they just need a job because there's nothing else out there?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Well, now that is a really tough question. And as for the IAs, since I don't deal directly with the army. I can talk about the Iraqi police. Some of them want a job because there is unemployment. But when you come here, you can take a job as a street sweeper, which they currently have out there, or you can take a job as a policeman. The pay is much better for the policeman, but look at the danger level. So you have to really weigh that out.

Some of them, yes, do just want a job. I would tell you some of them, though, actually feel that they want to make their country a little bit better for their kids than they had it, and you do have that out there too. When I normally talk to a lot of Iraqis, like the River Patrol, they're on the Tigris River, no protection, with a lot of bad guys at times on the shores shooting at them. But yet, several of them were with the original River Patrol we set up in the summer of 2003 and they're still here. Well, you know, maybe that's job security, but shoot, that's an awful lethal job that they're in.

So it's a very difficult question. I can't really answer it directly, but I would say we have no shortage of people wanting to be police officers. They seem to execute the duty and go to the academy with optimism; they listen to the instruction. Is it just because of economics? I'm sure that's part of it.

Q Okay, great, thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, any other questions, follow-ups?

Q Has there been anything in the last week and a half, any good developments we can get out there?

GEN. PHILLIPS: Yes, as a matter of fact, I've got one that I can tell you about that just took place today. There was a suicide vehicle bomb that was going down, and the national police were out there doing their job; they identified it early, they engaged it. It exploded in place, wounding 21 civilians who happened to be in the area -- but wounding. No one was killed. Most of the wounds were not that serious. So you had national policemen that were doing what we ask them to do; they did it the right way, and they just probably saved a great deal of lives. And this happened around lunchtime today.

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Following that, they, the national police, identified three other vehicles in the vicinity that were also VBIEDs, you know, vehicle- borne explosive devices there. And they brought in their own ELD, took them apart. So I have to say, that was one of the most positive things I've seen in a while.

Q Just -- sorry -- this is what city?

GEN. PHILLIPS: This is right in Baghdad.

Q Okay.

GEN. PHILLIPS: And this is recent. This is about as current as you can get. I just got the report a short time ago.

MR. HOLT: Excellent. All right, General Phillips, thank you for joining us today, and we appreciate your time, and hopefully we can do this again soon.

GEN. PHILLIPS: I really appreciate it. Thanks for taking the time to let us give a little bit of the good news that's going on over here. There is bad news, but there is an awful lot of good news and I'm still optimistic.

Q General, thank you very much.

Q Thanks.

GEN. PHILLIPS: Thank you. Have a good day.

MR. HOLT: Thank you, sir.

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